

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7231
INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMCONSUL NAHA
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA
OAC CAMP BUTLER OKINAWA JA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 06864

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, EFIS, JA, CH
SUBJECT: TOKYO SPECULATION ON CHINESE MOTIVES

1. CHINESE FISHING FLEET'S PERSISTENT ACTIVITY OVER PAST
WEEK IN AND AROUND JAPANESE CLAIMED TERRITORIAL WATERS OFF
SENKAKU ISLANDS, HAS SPAWNED HOST OF THEORIES HERE AS
JAPANESE, MANY OF WHOM HAD COME TO VIEW PRC AS BENEVOLENT
NEIGHBOR, SEEK TO FIND EXPLANATION FOR CHINESE ACTIONS.
WE HAVE MENTIONED SOME OF THESE IN PREVIOUS REPORTING, BUT
PRESENT OUR COMPILATION BELOW FOR REFERENCE AND COMMENT OF
ADDRESSEES.

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-- A. CHINESE WERE DISSATISFIED AND IMPATIENT WITH
FUKUDA'S FOOT-DRAGGING TOWARD PFT; MAY HAVE DECIDED HE WAS
NOT SERIOUS ABOUT CONCLUDING TREATY, AND DECIDED TO SHOW
DISPLEASURE, HOPING PERHAPS TO STIR UP PRO-FUKUDA RIVALS
IN LDP. IF THIS WAS OBJECTIVE, CONSENSUS IS CHINESE, LIKE
SOVIETS, MISCALCULATED NATIONALISTS SENTIMENT. THEY MAY
HAVE ENCOURAGED CRITICISM OF FUKUDA FOR BUNDLING CHINESE

RELATIONS, BUT THEY HAVE NOT BUILT UP SUPPORT FOR PFT.
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-- B. CHINESE WERE ANGERED BY ARGUMENTS OF PFT OPPONENTS DURING DEBATES WITHIN LDP OVER PAST SEVERAL WEEKS TO AFFECT THAT SENKAKU QUESTION, SHELVED BETWEEN JAPAN AND CHINA IN 1972, SHOULD BE "CLARIFIED". THERE IS SOME TALK THAT PRO-TAIWAN ELEMENTS IN LDP WERE PUT UP TO RAISING SENKAKU ISSUE IN EFFORT TO SCUTTLE PFT; IF TRUE IT WOULD APPEAR THEY HAVE HAD AT LEAST MOMENTARY SUCCESS.

-- C. CHINESE FELT THAT, BECAUSE SENKAKU QUESTION WAS SHELVED IN 1972, TO CONCLUDE PFT WITHOUT MAKING GESTURE IN SUPPORT OF THEIR POSITION WOULD BE TANTAMOUNT TO GIVING UP ALL CLAIM TO ISLANDS. THEREFORE, WITH VIEW TOWARD POSSIBLE OIL DEPOSITS, CHINESE FELT THEY HAD TO MAKE NECESSARY GESTURE PRIOR TO MOVING AHEAD WITH PFT. LDP SECRETARY GENERAL OHIRA, BOTH PUBLICLY AND IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION IN PAST FEW DAYS, HAS AFFIRMED THAT SENKAKU ISSUE WAS NOT RAISED BY JAPAN OR PRC WHEN HE ACCOMPANIED PRIME MINISTER TANAKA TO PEKING AS FONMIN TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS. THIS BEING SO, JAPAN INTENDED TO ACT ON BASIS THAT ITS SOVEREIGNTY WAS NOT ACTIVELY CHALLENGED.

-- D. THERE ARE DIVISIONS WITHIN CHINESE LEADERSHIP, AND THOSE WHO HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN WORLD WAR II WANTED TO
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SCUTTLE PROGRESS IN SINO-JAPANESE RELATIONS.

-- E. REGIONAL/FACTIONAL CHINESE INTERESTS ARE TRYING TO EMBARRASS PEKING, AS INDICATED BY HOME PORTING OF MOST BOATS IN SHANGHAI AND FUKIEN; FACT THAT OTHERS ARE FROM PORTS AS DISTANT AS LIAONING APPARENTLY IS IGNORED BY PROPONENTS OF THIS THEORY.

-- F. CHINESE FISHERMEN WERE NOT AWARE OF EXTENSION OF JAPAN'S TERRITORIAL LIMIT FROM 3 MILES TO 12 MILES. WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE AS YET TO PIN DOWN WHETHER CHINESE HAVE BEEN FISHING OFF SENKAKUS IN PAST, BUT GOJ SOURCES HAVE STATED THIS IS NEW DEVELOPMENT. EVEN IF THERE WERE PRECEDENT FOR FISHING OUTSIDE THREE-MILE LIMIT, THIS EXPLANATION, WHILE PERHAPS PLAUSIBLE AT OUTSET OF INCIDENT, IS DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT SOME DAYS LATER.

-- G. CHINESE EXPLANATION THAT BOATS' PRESENCE WAS "ACCIDENTAL" WAS SINCERE. AS TIME PASSES WITH BOATS STILL THERE, THIS HAS BECOME A BIT THREADBARE.

2. THERE IS NO WAY WE CAN ACCURATELY ACCESS CHINESE MOTIVES

AT THIS JUNCTURE AND FROM THIS DISTANCE, AND MOST JAPANESE OBSERVERS WITH WHOM WE HAVE TALKED REMAIN PUZZLED. WE ARE INCLINED TO OPT FOR SOME COMBINATION OF HYPOTHESES A, B AND C AS MOST CONVINCING. BY CONFRONTING JAPANESE ON SENKAKU SOVEREIGNTY, PRC MUST HAVE REALIZED IT WOULD MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR FUKUDA TO MOVE AHEAD ON PFT, BUT MAY HAVE REASONED THAT FUKUDA WAS UNLIKELY TO TAKE BIT IN TEETH ANYWAY; THAT IT HAD WAITED OUT PFT FOR QUITE AWHILE AND ANOTHER YEAR OR SO WOULD NOT MATTER; AND IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES IT WAS WORTH LAYING DOWN A MARKER ON ITS SOVEREIGNTY CLAIM. MANSFIELD

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